

State Reporting Burden Reduction Initiative
Office of Congressional and Intergovernmental Relations (OCIR)

Description: States conduct the overwhelming majority of the core environmental protection activities required by federal and state laws (e.g., permitting, inspections, monitoring, cleanups), but they rely on federal grant funds for one-third of their operational funds. As state environmental program management capacity has increased, there has been a corresponding increase in demand for state program reporting and measures of environmental results. Over the years, the states have consistently expressed concerns about continued increases in reporting requirements while federal funds for state programs have decreased.

The Environmental Council of the States (ECOS) participated in a meeting with senior EPA officials to communicate the states' priorities for the FY08 budget. ECOS reiterated the states' concerns over funding decreases and requested a firm commitment from EPA's leadership to eliminate non-essential reporting requirements.

In the FY08 technical budget guidance, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer directed OCIR to work with the states, program and regional offices to inventory EPA's reporting requirements. OCIR proposed a pragmatic approach which was approved by Deputy Administrator Marcus Peacock. OCIR: (1) Asked the states to list their top five high-burden, low-value reporting requirements; (2) Worked collaboratively with the national program managers (NPMs) and regions to determine which specific changes in reporting can be implemented; (3) Established a process for elevating and resolving difficult issues, and; (4) Established a transparent process to record EPA's decisions and rationale, and track status of implementation.

OCIR's collaboration with the states, the NPMs and regions to inventory low-value, high-burden reporting requirements yielded impressive results: thirty-eight states submitted 239 recommendations for reducing reporting burden. EPA's preliminary review and evaluation in March 2007 revealed that 20% of the recommendations can be implemented in FY08 or earlier. During the next six months, OCIR worked closely with the NPMs and regions to seek additional opportunities for reducing reporting burden. In September 2007, we issued a progress report indicating that EPA had adopted and agreed to implement almost 60% of the state recommendations by the end of FY08.

OCIR will continue to work with the NPMs, regions and the states to address the remainder of the recommendations and build upon our recent successes. This initiative has become a cornerstone of Marcus Peacock's performance management agenda at EPA due to its success and future potential.

Activity URL: <http://www.epa.gov/ocir/nepps/burden.htm>